

Development of Tamil Children Literature During the Sanggam Period

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Abstract

This study is an analysis that involves the Development in the History of Tamil Children's Literature during the Sanggam Period. It is rather difficult to ensure the existence of children literature. Besides, literature has long existed and still exists for many years. Development in children literature has always been connected with two persons or two main characters that are the children themselves and their ancestors. In addition, the presence of children literature in nineteenth century is considered as the inner power for the development of current Tamil Literature. The very first grammar book '*Tholkappiyam*' and other scriptures in 'Sanggam Period' also gave information about children literature.

Keyword: Tamil Children's Literature, Sanggam Period, *Tholkappiyam*, Mid-Sanggam Period

Introduction

Children literature is a genre in literature that is very influential. Children literature has become an important element to ensure a bright future for the children. Nevertheless, it is rather difficult to ensure the existence of children literature. Besides, literature has long existed and still exists for many years. Development in children literature has always been connected with two persons or two main characters that are the children themselves and their ancestors. Since many years the ancestors has become the most important individual that kept the culture of telling stories to the children. (Dr. Poovannan : 1999, page 14).

In the beginning, children literature was not written in paper or books. It developed as an oral literature. All races and countries in the entire world used oral literature in their daily life. The developments in oral literature and folk literature have strong connection with children literature. (Dr. Poovannan : 1999, page 12). It is rather difficult to identify who is the founder of oral literature. But the oral literature has its own history. It is popular and protected for ages. For decades, children literature was under the power of community to this time. Now children literature has taken a new shape. It has become just like other literature in line with other genres found in literature.

In addition, the presence of children literature in nineteenth century is considered as the inner power for the development of current Tamil Literature. The very first

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grammar book '*Tholkappiyam*' and other scriptures in 'Sanggam Period' also gave information about children literature. As though, no clear information that describes the features of literature that is related to the process of growth of children that contributes to the development of children literature. Whatsoever, there is one clear picture that the development in the present children literature is the continuum of evidence found in the great '*Tholkappiyam*'. (Dr. Ambiyum Yuvassanthira: 1989, page 17).

Tholkappiyam

There is various information related to children in *Tholkappiyam*. Some of the content is life style that centres 'agham', pregnant mothers, giving birth to child, confinement after deliver, naming ceremony, bolding ceremony and it goes on until the child is blessed by God. All these aspects are compiled in '*Tholkappiyam*' (Dr. Poovannan : 1999, page 15).

'Oppodu punarntha uvamatthanum
Thondruvathu kilarantha ninai vinaalum
Endriru vagaithe pishivagai nilaiyee'

(*Tholkappiyam*: Porul: 488)

Therefore, there are evidence the grammar book '*Tholkappiyam*' has songs for children that have various types of riddles for children, songs with sense of humour, stories about children that possess good moral and children fictions. (Dr. Ambiyum Yuvassanthira: 1989, page 18). Furthermore, Dr. Poovannan also proved and showed several instances of riddles (pishi) that existed during the time of '*Tholkappiyam*'. Most of the riddles are almost the same as the one being used now. For an instance, '*Pirai kavvi malai nadakkum*'. This is an example of riddle used in Sanggam Period. It is referred to an elephant, 'Malai' means hills. 'Pirai' means moon. 'Hills walk carrying the moon'. This riddle explains that an elephant is walking while lifting its trunk high up as if a moon. Children are exposed to such a riddle for the process of protection and prevention. Indirectly, it promotes and widens the thinking skills among the children that inculcate element of excitement. (Dr. Ambiyum Yuvassanthira : 1989, page 20).

Sanggam Period

During the Sanggam Period, many scriptures such as '*Patthupattu*' and '*Etthuthogai*' speak a lot about children. '*Seyyiyul*' with the theme 'agham' describes a lot about how toddlers utter words that touches their parents' hearts, shows moon in the sky while feeding food or milk, children's' games showed through songs of 'agham'. (Dr. Ambiyum Yuvassanthira : 1989, page 19).

In Sanggam Period, although a person is very rich and possesses wealth, the person is considered not living a complete life or has default in his life if he does not have a child of his own. There is a saying, happiness at home a lot depends in the ability to bear children. Having newborn in a family becomes a benchmark to determine happiness of a family. In conjunction, many songs in 'puram' also display the importance of children and the role of mother in upbringing of the children. Although there are various song in 'agham' and 'puram' that are related to children, they only touch more on giving birth rather than focusing on children literature.

In depth, literature book entitle 'Aghananuru' also contain information about children literature. The 54th 'Seiyul' was written by a poet named Marttrukkilar Maganar Kotrang Kotranar.

'mukhil nila thigaltharum muuvath
thinggal, ponnudai thaali enmagan ottri,
varukugai yaayin tharugu venpaal'
(Aghananuru: Seiyul 54)

Referring to the above song, the poet is describing a situation whereby a mother is feeding food while showing the moon in the sky. The mother is inviting the moon to play with her beloved toddler. If the moon comes and play, the mother will offer milk as a token of appreciation. Those days, neither mother nor grandmother or even 'sevilithai' will usually sing such songs while their beloved toddler is eating.

Apart of that, 'Tholkappiyam' and 'Literature during Sanggam Period' reflect element in cultures and life style at that time. Both the scriptures are strong evidence of civilized Indian community. Although there are records about children, but it is merely long stories about the process of raising children or children literature. Development in children literature is in line with children development. Although the information and records clearly show that people has already thoughts about literature. At the same time, both the scriptures become the source of reference today. (K. Kailasapathy: 1980, page 48)

Mid-Sanggam Period (Sanggam Maruviya Kaalam)

During Mid-Sanggam Period or also known as 'Sanggam Maruviya Kaalam', it was the period whereby the literature book entitles 'Pathinenkeel Kanakku' was written. In this particular book, there are discussion about the importance of birth and community. Besides, the production of 'Thirukkural' and 'Thiruvalluvar' that is known as scriptures that are rich with moral values and ethics which give enforcement to the importance of children for the existence of the country that is stabile and renowned. 'Thiruvalluvar' had classified a section for birth (makkat perhu) to create awareness to the community so that the public will give full attention in the process of children's' growth.

'Thiruvalluvar' knows the value of children born in this world. Parents play an important role in the upbringing and to mould the children in line with the need of world. They need to shine like diamond that is newly polished. Since children are considered as expensive gems that glows so they need to be brought up with moral values and good ethics (Mayilai Seeni Vengkadasamy : 1980, 132).

Besides 'Thiruvalluvar', there also other well-known literature scriptures such as 'Silappathigaram' that describes the glorious moment of 'Khovalan' since the birth of 'Manimegalai' and involved in many good deeds so that his child could live in happiness in this world. While in the literature scripture of 'Sinthamani', there are information about the importance of education and the heroic 'Seevagan' that explains each and every literature scriptures has its own importance that has recorded information about children.

Apart of that, during the Mid-Sanggam Period there are proves information about the childhood have been recorded. In 'Periappuranam' there are incidents that have

been recorded about childhood that are related to thirty six people of 'Nayanmargal'. Whereas in 'Kambaramayana' there is information about childhood that is related to 'Rama' and 'Ilatchumana'. Literature scripture, 'Nalavenbha', has also recorded various information about children of 'Nalan' since childhood. In conjunction, it is very obvious that records about childhood has already started since 'Tholkappiyam' till the arrival of the Europe.

Development of Literature in the form of Moral/Ethics (Ara Ilakkiyanggal)

Scriptures of literature that was produced since beginning of sixteen century till the nineteenth century can be categorised as literature that features values of morals and ethics. In conjunction, there are two famous literature scriptures that inculcate moral values that are 'Aathishudi' and 'Khondrai Venthana'. Both these scriptures are classified as books produced for children. In depth, Avvaiyhar is a poet and the renowned for producing children literature. (Dr. Poovannan : 1999, page 125). The list of Children Books are namely; 'Aathishudi', 'Muthurai', 'Khondrai Venthana' and 'Nalvalzi' which were written by Avvaiyar. Whereas 'Vetrhi Veerkhai' was written by Athiveera Paandiyana, 'Ulagha Neethi' was written by Ulaganathar Pandithar and 'Neethi Neri Vilakkam' written by Kumaraguruparar (Mayilai Seeni Vengkadassamy : 1980, page 149).

There are various research conducted by number of researchers to ensure that 'Aathichudi' can also be considered apart of children literature. Many researchers voiced out their opinions that, although this scripture was produced during the Mid-Sanggam Period, well children now can still read, understand and appreciate the meaning of 'Aathichudi'. As 'Aathichudi' is easy to be understood, attracts children's interest, possesses meaning that can develop oneself and suit the level of the children so it can be categorised as children literature. It plays a role like a bridge that connects ethics with inner strength of the children. (Dr. Poovannan : 2003, page 25).

However, there are researches that suggest that literature scriptures that were produced by Avvaiyhar, for instance, 'Aathichudi' is classified as children literature by referring to the system of teaching and learning then. In Malaysia, the role of 'Sekolah Pondok' cannot be ignored as it contributes in the development of the education system in our country. 'Sekolah Pondok' uses limited resources from the syllabus, the bad infrastructure of the buildings, unqualified teachers yet it showed responsibility as an informal education institution. 'Sekolah Pondok' is still proud to channel knowledge to the schooling children. The same phenomenon happened those days where 'Sekolah Pondok' known as 'Thinnaip Palli' does not have printed materials that were used as source of reference by children for learning.

So, there was lack of books. Facilities were insufficient. The children were exposed to a method called memorizing. This method was the solution. Phonetics and teaching order were exposed using memorising method at 'Sekolah Pondok'. Teachers used this memorising method to teach the alphabets. Pronunciation and memorising were given emphasis rather than understanding the meaning. In order to make the the process of memorising easy and fast, 'Aathichudi' and 'Kondrai Venthana' were used optimal as the vocals letters were perfectly arranged. The use of phrase and simple sentences made the mind react will so that the children can learn (Mayilai Seeni Vengkadassamy:

1980, page 164). Memorising 'Aattlichudi' and 'Kondrhai Venthan' became the short cut and more fruitful. The children memorised in the form of rhythm of songs.

Therefore, literature scriptures that were produced by Avvaiyhar like 'Aattlichudi' and 'Kondrhai Venthan' were used as materials for teaching and associated with children's interest in inculcating teaching and learning in school till today. Most of the scriptures inculcate moral values and ethics is a part of over system of education today. Inculcating and exposing moral values through scriptures is to generate harmony and peace among the youngsters today.

Conclusion

Therefore, children literature during the Sanggam Period is the hard evident to show the presence of thought related to childhood. The existence of thoughts and incidents related to childhood becomes the basis of development in children literature in the nineteenth century. The production of book with the theme moral and ethics that involves the features of children literature is a clear prove the importance of children literature in the development of education system and Tamil literature throughout the globalization period.

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